

Corui Chronicle

Journal of the American Society of Crows and Ravens Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 2003 (C.E.)

DEFENSE OF MEANING

ASCAR speaks up for clarity

As previously mentioned in the Chronicle, modes of communication are becoming ever more diverse among crows and ravens. Observers have noted that expressions and dialects used within one corvid community will differ as much from those in another as do Swedish and Spanish. However, the development of linguadiversity is, zoologically, by no means universal. In fact, within our own species the reverse appears to be occurring. Recently William Sutherland, a researcher at East Anglia University, U.K., reported in "Nature Magazine" that many of the world's 6,809 presently "living" human languages may soon disappear. He calculates that 357 of them are now used and can be understood by 50 or fewer individuals and, therefore, must be classified as "critically endangered."

Regrettable as the disintegration of the once marvelous Tower of Babel may be, ASCAR is more alarmed by a related but even more worrisome matter. While the English language is still in wide use it is clearly becoming enfeebled and less meaningful. Now pandemic, the Euphemism Virus has been recklessly spread by flacks, propagandists, ad agencies, chat roomers, talking heads and others with an ideological or material interest in making it more difficult for everybody to understand what anybody else is talking about. To combat, hopefully to reverse, these trends the Board of ASCAR is now devoting

not considerable resources to the Defense of Meaning Program. As an initial project, DOM translators are compiling "Modern Meanings, A Lexicon of Tricky, Contemporary

Words, Phrases and Conceits." As the following excerpts indicate, Chronicle readers of every persuasion and pursuit will no doubt find this handsome volume to be, in a manner of speaking, invaluable.

Adolescent: Describes the unseemly behavior of mature acquaintances who do not act their age and appear to be enjoying themselves.

Aggression: The forceful pursuit of self-interest; an unfortunate male vice or too-long suppressed female virtue.

Assumption: An undocumented belief upon which skilled logicians erect plausible conclusions.

Attitude: Rude contemptuous behavior displayed by those too old to be cute but too young to have developed much character or command of invective.

Bipartisanship: A policy advocated by losing partisans who



Continued on page 2

CORVID IQ

Ten years ago, the Chronicle published this quiz. Undoubtedly some readers will remember it and possibly all the answers. For those who didn't take the quiz in 1993, we offer it again. Answers are on page 3.

1. Name continents without crows.
2. Of these three lands, which doesn't have crows: New Zealand, Australia, Greenland.
3. What is the number of primary feathers on the wings of corvids?
4. The species name of the common crow is *brachyrhynchos*. What does

this Latin mean?

5. Crows have an abnormally large gland – which one?
6. Name the state where 10 species of corvid can be seen.
7. What is the smallest North American crow by length?
8. What is the range of Flores Crow?
9. Which is the largest all-black corvid?
10. Which corvid is decreasing in coastal regions of the British Isles as a result of the competition with the jackdaw?
11. Which is the most likely island on

which to see Forest Raven?

12. What is the only crow known on the Aru Island of New Guinea?
13. What is the local name for the Jamaican crow?
14. What two crows are found in Cuba?
15. If you laid them bill to tail, how many ravens would it take to make a rod (within two)?
16. What is the only corvid described but not pictured in the National Geographic Society's field guide to birds?

DEFENSE OF MEANING Continued from page 1

DOM translators toil to make sense of it

hope to wrest at least some spoils from the victors.

Brainwashed:

Describes the condition of formerly right-headed persons who have been cleverly induced by wrong-headed ones to change their minds, political allegiance or religious affiliation.

Burnout: Mental exhaustion experienced by power cooks who can no longer tolerate the heat in their kitchens.

Candid: Refusing, on principle, to sugarcoat the flaws of others.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: A condition of general lassitude suffered by those who find their lives extremely tiresome.

Colorful: Describes the character of a brash, obnoxious person too formidable to be called a complete son-of-a-bitch.

Consensus: An acceptable truth arrived at by averaging the gross weight of conflicting opinions without regard for their net worth; obviates objective judgments.

Conservatives: Formerly traditionalists; now futurists intent on radically altering—for their own good—the perspectives and prospects of other people.

Conviction: A cherished, petrified assumption.

Corporate ethics: Codes of good business behavior to which corporations voluntarily subscribe if and when market conditions and unethical competitors permit.

Cynics: Intellectual Peeping Toms who take perverse pleasure in gawking at naked realities.

Divisive: Ideas and practices which cause schisms within uneasy or unholy alliances.

Economic indicators: Prophetic signs which trained economists can interpret as easily and accurately as experienced gypsies can palms.

Egocentrics: Individuals who act as though their opinions, interests and problems are more significant than one's own.

Embedded: To be seduced and co-opted by the authorities; e.g.,



Now pandemic, the
Euphemism Virus has
been recklessly
spread by flacks,
propagandists,
ad agencies..., and
others with an
ideological or
material interest in
making it more
difficult for
everybody to
understand what
anybody else is
talking about.

embedded academics, reformers or journalists.

Ethnic cleansing: Purifying nations, cultures or neighborhoods by eliminating dirty and undesirable elements; an extreme form of zoning.

Extremists: Cultural gorillas who, from beyond the pale, pelt respectable, middle-of-the-road travelers with filthy conceits.

Face time: The opportunity to get in the face of another who habitually hides behind electronic devices.

Family planning: Formerly to make decisions about meals, chores, vacations and other domestic matters; now, to choose between contraceptives.

Fruitful discussions: Diplomatic exchanges which bring about agreement that the oranges of one party are comparable to the apples of the other.

Grim realities: Hard facts and harsh truths which soft headed and hearted persons must, exasperatingly, be forced to face and comprehend.

Hypochondria: An affliction of people who enjoy poor health.

Impotent: politics - the inability to firm up support for a candidate or cause; **sociology** - the inability of individuals and groups to screw others as they have been screwed.

Judgmental: An irritating habit possessed by acquaintances who call attention to one's flaws and misdeeds which could be comfortably ignored.

Kinky: Describes unnatural practices, usually artistic or sexual of imaginative, uninhibited or lithe people.

Left-wing radicals: Formerly fierce socialists; now federalists.

Libertarians: Closet anarchists who staunchly defend laws which protect the persons and property of respectable citizens and economic royalists.

Logic: The study of cause and effect; now, more commonly, that which supports one's own thoughtful, well-informed opinions and confounds ignorant fools.

Loss of self esteem: Occurs when others lose sight of one's estimable qualities.

Moderates: A small sect of political and cultural agnostics; individuals afflicted with intellectual double vision which causes them to see two sides of most questions.

Natural: Broadly - all beings, happenings and places which are not obviously unnatural; narrowly - rare and pure things uncontaminated by people who are not environmentalists.

Negative campaigning: A traditional tactic employed by candidates for public office who hope to convince voters that they are the lesser of two or more evils.

DEFENSE OF MEANING *continued from page 2*

DOM lexicon defines tricky words, phrases, conceits

Optimist: One who habitually mistakes a pretty pickle for a piece of cake.

Order: The Holy Grail of megalomaniacs.

Paranoia: A delusionary condition which causes parents, lovers, spouses, employers and other associates to be irrationally suspicious of one's legitimate motives and objectives.

Party Line: Malicious nonsense parroted by another party.

Pessimist: One married to or closely associated with an optimist.

Policy: The hobgoblin of large minds.

Populists: Formerly egalitarians; now, conservatives who bowl.

Pro-Choice Movement: Holds that absolute control over one's body is a birthright but that prior to birth individuals are insufficiently mature to make responsible medical decisions.

Quibbling: A tactic employed by obstructionists to spoil large ideas and plans by pointing out mundane errors of fact, logical absurdities and structural flaws.

Radical feminists: Females who demand the right to be at least as wrong and self-righteous as male chauvinist pigs.

Radical right: An aggressive evangelical sect once thought to be found only on the Lunatic Fringe. Now members are principled racists, misogynists, homophobes and plutocrats.

Recycling: A system of trash disposal which permits affluent persons to be, simultaneously, concerned environmentalists and conspicuous consumers.

Repressed memories: Recollections which appear when pressed by legal or psychiatric professionals.

Right to Life Movement: Defends fetal rights, contraceptive bans, capital punishment, a strong military and the vigorous persecution of moral delinquents who do not.

Role models: Celebrated entertainers and athletes who are not convicted murderers, rapists, armed robbers, drug addicts, abusers of women, children, attractive birds or mammals.

Self-fulfillment: To fill one's self full of what you covet; a glut-tony therapy now favored by many psychic caregivers.

Special interest groups: Groups whose selfish concerns are repugnant to disinterested groups.



Stress: A nervous disorder of the enlightened and affluent.

Tax Reform Movement: Advocates abolishing or greatly reducing the taxes of people who can best afford to pay them but prefer to spend their money on politicians and lobbyists.

Tolerance: A virtue - making allowances for the flaws of those who are somewhat annoying, mistaken or different. A sin - making allowances for those who are very threatening, absolutely wrong or alien.

Traditional values: One's own inherited or long standing habits, attitudes and taboos which everyone should be required to make their own.

Traumatic experiences: Exceptionally influential and negative happenings. Positive or epiphanic traumatic experiences have become exceedingly rare in the post-Freudian era.

True believers: Beneficiaries of revelations which give them certain knowledge of exactly what other humans should be.

Unpatriotic words and deeds: Those which are critical of the motives and practices of political, military or law enforcement authorities who certainly must know what is best for the rest of us.

Unspeakable: Refers to extremely heinous events and behaviors which excite widespread public comment and discussion.

Vegetarians: Those who demonstrate a love of the fauna through egregious acts of floracide, e.g., by uprooting, aborting, skinning, slicing, mincing, boiling, baking, frying and consuming plants, often still living ones.

Wellness: Pricey good health.

Xenophobia: An affliction caused by geographical isolation and cultural in-breeding. May cause social constipation, bloated defense budgets and high tariffs.

Youthful indiscretions: Upscale juvenile delinquency.

Zealot: A crackpot, obsessively interested in activities, ideas and causes one finds irrelevant, demented or subversive.



Corvid IQ scoreboard

1. Antarctica and South America
2. New Zealand
3. 10
4. *Brachys* = short; *rhynchos* = beak
5. Salivary
6. Arizona
7. Mexican
8. Flores in Lesser Sunda Islands

9. Raven
10. Chough
11. Tasmania
12. Brown Headed
13. Jabbering Crow
14. Cuban and Palm
15. Eight
16. Northwestern Crow

If you scored 14 to 16 points, count yourself at the top of the roost; 10 to 14, you're unflappable; 6 to 10, you're winging it; and 1 to 6, nestbound.

Quiz submitted by Corvi 23, 32, 46, 64, 92, and 128



THE TALK OF THE ROOST

SWOOPED

The Chronicle received this raven story which seems a fine example of corvi at play on a summer's day or any day, any season.

A friend lived near a small town and farming community called Box Elder in South Dakota in the 1950s, and the following event happened to a friend of his, a farmer named Ken Kellogg.

Ken raised sheep, and he had this surly, unpredictable ram which boldly tried to escape the pasture at any opportunity. He also had quite a temper (the ram, not Ken).

A bunch of ravens had their nests near by — about 20 ravens in all. Ten ravens make up a swoop, just like more than four sheep are a flock, etc.

Anyway, these ravens loved to harass the ram. They'd fly down into the field and caw at him until he charged at them. Then they'd all fly upward, and the ram would crash into the fence.

Once, though, one of the ravens didn't get out of the way in time, and he was crushed against the fencepost. The others decided to get revenge.

When Ken Kellogg came out to check on his sheep one day, he forgot to lock the gate properly. The ravens, working together, pushed it open, and lured the ram out into the hayfield. They flew toward the bailing machine, the ram bleating furiously all the way. At the last moment, the ravens pulled up — and the ram ran straight into the bailer. He came

out the other side in a mangled package.

Twenty big black birds came to perch upon him, satisfied, leaving the Ken with.....two swoops of ravens on a package of Kellogg's brazen ram.

WHAT CROW WOULD SAY

Corvi 724 of Chicago, Ill., sent the following article from March 7, 2003, The Albany Times Union <http://timesunion.com>. It reminds ASCAR that it is good to remember: What Would a Crow Say or WWCS.

HUMANS MAKE IT HARD FOR A CROW TO GET BY

[by] Joe "The Crow" Hoffman, Albany

"I'll tell you, it's bad news if one of us animal-type beings gets on the wrong side of those human-type beings. They're just downright mean. Just talk to our brothers, the wolves or the bison. These humans, they'll just as soon blow your head off as talk to you.

"There was a group of humans called the Native Americans. We got along with them just fine. But the humans that are clogging up the Albany area these days just don't like us. They don't like the way we talk. They don't like the way we eat. They don't like the way we roost. They don't like the way we die. They just don't like us.

"Now, one of your readers suggested that we're a man-made problem. Well, I beg to differ. No human being every [stet] made a crow. They aren't smart enough. We're pretty high-tech stuff.

We're graceful flyers that can clip ourselves to the highest twig of the highest maple in Albany. Have you ever seen one of us swaying in a morning breeze from such a perch?

"We've been identified as the smartest of all the birds. So maybe we deserve a little respect and a little space to bed down in the winter without being tortured by lights and lasers, bombs and boom boxes."

CROWFILM

We received an email note from Edward P. Davee in February announcing that he had finished an experimental short film on crows entitled "Crowfilm."

We missed the screenings at Reed College in Portland, Ore., on March 28; the Kansas City Filmmakers Jubilee, April 4; the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in Durham, N.C., April 4; and the International Short Film Festival in Hamburg, Germany, June 4.

He provided a Web address www.epdavee.com to see a few stills and clips from his film noting: "The site is brand new and has some problems that will be fixed soon, and the clips will look much better, hopefully by the end of next week."

One 60-second clip features three to four crows walking about a fenced lot feeding and perhaps attempting to crack an egg that one holds under a claw. The

Continued on page 5

TALK *continued*

film technique is deliberately spotty and gives the impression the viewer is hidden and watching the crows from a hole in the fence. The viewer sees as much or more of the fence than the crows – a somewhat annoying effect. The music is a combination of comic rhythm and eerie whine.

For those who visit the site, prepare to spend several minutes for the clips to load so that you can view them.

DELINQUENT BEHAVIORS

I noticed you mentioned that ravens and crows are rarely seen together. You might be interested to know that where we live outside of Halifax, Nova Scotia, the two species overlap and intermingle quite a bit.

We have set up an extra large bird feeder with a platform designed to attract corvids. It is common for us to get a group of three or four ravens early in the morning, and then a group of about six crows for much of the rest of the day. A couple of the ravens are exceptionally large, even for ravens.

You might also be interested in local anecdotes about corvid mischief.

Corvids in the area have been seen on several occasions pulling the rubber supporting strip out from around car windshields, as well as sitting on ledges above doorways of large buildings and deliberately kicking snow onto passersby. Both acts seem deliberately mischievous, rather than purposeful. I would be interested in any other anecdotal evidence of “delinquency” in corvids. – *Corvi 811, Halifax, Nova Scotia*

SPAGHETTI STORY

Corvi 25 of Port Townsend, Wash., writes of her discovery that crows not only will eat her leftover spaghetti, but seem to enjoy leftover minestrone as well as her grouchy neighbor’s bread scraps.

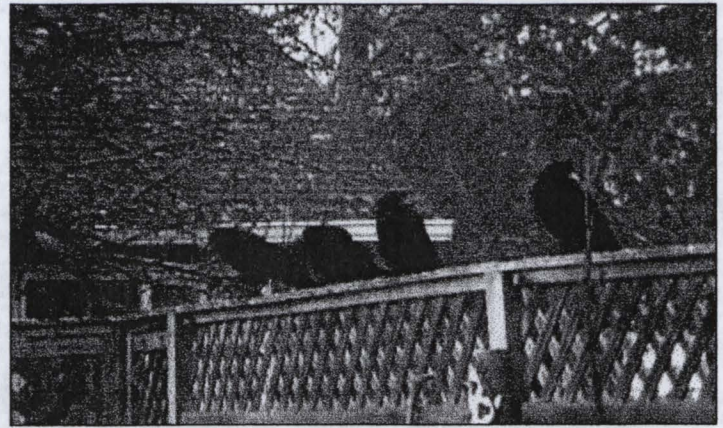
“I’m sure the crows secretly rule Friday Harbor, Wash., a town of

2,000 humans on an island in northern Puget Sound. You can only get here via ferry, boat, or...fly. They may even be “connected,” if you know what I mean. The ravens live in the center of the island but town is definitely the crows’ turf. They hang out on the beach, the backs of parked trucks and along the roofs and lightpoles and backyard fences.

“They love Italian cooking.

“Having an abundance of leftover spaghetti I decided to feed it to the crows that run my neighborhood. I draped the strings over the small plum tree branches and some on the aging cherry tree. I gave my usual crow call to let them know breakfast was served. “ACK!! ACK!!” (That’s my call.)

“My teenage boys think I’m nuts to call crows. Next thing, I have around 20 crows with spaghetti sitting along the top of the cedar fence that surrounds the backyard. The spaghetti was draped from all of their beaks and the contrast of their shiny black feathers, the gray weathered fence and the ivory of the food was a great visual delight. They loved the treat!



Waiting for a spaghetti or perhaps a salmon dinner, crows line up on the back fence of Corvi 25’s Port Townsend, Wash., home.

“Now I always cook extra spaghetti.

“The next Italian meal was leftover minestrone soup. I made so much that I couldn’t eat it one more time. What was I thinking when I made so much? So unto the compost heap! The crows went wild! Now I knew that Italian cooking was their favorite.

“When we had pet rats, Katie and Caitlin, (don’t ask how I got conned into having pet rats or I would have to explain the million and one pigmy hamsters and the truly horrible geckos....) it was clear that Cheerios and fresh alfalfa sprouts made their little hearts sing! They would hide the treats in the hammock my son Evan built them in their awesome large cage complete with a Madrona branch.

“But back to the crows, I’ve noticed that they sometimes hide food in the gutters of houses in the neighborhood. I save salmon skin for them, which when found, they do not share! Reminds me of the rats and the Cheerios and sprouts!

“If I feed them enough days in a row then they start to come and sit on the fence, woodshed, trees and roof of the house and tell me it is breakfast time! The cats and dogs watch the crows from the windows and look at me as if to say, “Well, feed them, Woman!” We all watch the crows eat.

“Then they are off across the street to grouchy old Ed who gives them bread. You know Italians like to eat several courses at each meal.”

EAGLE/RAVEN

By Elizabeth Schultz

*Eagle, high
and mighty,
is not raven.
Snag-beaked,
he tears into
life, screaming
bloody murder.*

*Raven, curious
and ubiquitous,
is not eagle.*

*With a bill
like pliers,
he opens boxes
and clamshells,
croaking and
crooning over
his shining,
troublesome
discoveries.*

ROOST NOTES

Shock and awe

Earlier this year, the Chronicle has received newspaper clippings on how two communities attempted to manage winter crow roosts in their communities: Auburn, N.Y., and Ann Arbor, Mich. Here are excerpts from the clips.

SYRACUSE (N.Y.) POST-STANDARD

January 25, 2003

By Dave Tobin, Staff writer

Crow-shoot flier ruffles feathers

At least one business and two charities listed disavow planned hunt Feb. 1 and 2.

At ground zero of Auburn's crow roost, Susan Dello Stritto-Bouley, manager of Curley's Restaurant, knows the crow dilemma all too well.

...[T]he restaurant has lost customers because of crows. But Dello Stritto-Bouley doesn't want to antagonize people who love crows and was adamant Friday that her business has no connection to the scheduled Cayuga County crow shoot tournament, scheduled for Feb. 1 and 2. ...

Hours after The Post-Standard ran a story Friday about the shooting tournament, Dello Stritto-Bouley was fielding calls from people on both sides of the issue. ...

A wildlife rehabilitator in Liverpool, said ... "It's a horrible thing. I'm just so disappointed in people. I can't believe the mentality. These crows are so intelligent. I've raised them from hatchlings. Kids are going to witness this. This is a winter festival. How awful."

Thursday, representatives from two charities named in a tournament advertisement - Hospice of the Fingerlakes and SAVAR - said they knew nothing about the event and did not want to be associated with it.

Tom Lennox, one of the event's organizers, said he felt very badly about causing the charities any distress. "I want to apologize to them," he said. "I was thinking out loud when I was putting the ad in, and those two organizations are very dear to my heart...."

"As far as the animal activists, hey - you got to break a few eggs to make an omelet. This is going to bring people in from all over who will spend a couple days in Auburn and spend money."

Local police agencies said the crow-shoot should not present any particular challenges. ...

SYRACUSE (N.Y.) POST-STANDARD

January 24, 2003

Shooters aim to curb Auburn's crows

A quiet attempt to kill the cawing now takes on the trappings of a contest.

By Dave Tobin Staff writer

...After years of grouching about the huge number of crows that roost all winter long in this city, some residents of Auburn and Cayuga County are mounting a two-day, crow-shoot tournament Feb. 1 and 2. The four-member team with the most dead crows wins. Organizers plan to donate proceeds to charity.

"Everybody's sick of them," said Tom Lennox, an organizer. "We're going to make a negative into a positive. It'll be fantastic."

The county-wide tournament has been run, somewhat quietly, the past three years, out of an Auburn bar called Spinouts. Last year, 160 people entered, and organizers realized they were onto something. This year they are advertising the tournament, and they are working to form a limited liability company called

Crows Unlimited.

"Auburn is renowned for its crows," said Jon Van Nest, owner of Windy Hill Shooting Supplies and Windy Hill Taxidermy in Moravia. "There's no reason we can't get some big names in there and turn this into a celebrity shoot. Put Auburn on the map."

Hunting of any kind isn't allowed in the city.

This isn't the first time civic-minded Auburnians have tried to put the city and its crows on the map.

Starting about 15 years ago, Auburn has been home to as many as 50,000 crows each winter. The roost has declined to about 25,000 recently, likely from the effects of West Nile virus, which is fatal to crows, said Kevin McGowan, an ornithologist at Cornell Ornithology Lab. ...

The roost has been studied by Cornell University researchers, documented by a film crew for National Geographic, and celebrated on a Save the Crows Web site. Some suggested Auburn host a crow festival, with music and a celebration of all things crow, but the idea never got off the ground. ...

"These sort of things [crow shoots] leave me pretty cold," said McGowan. "I don't mind hunting, if you kill something to eat it. But these guys aren't going to eat these crows, although they could - they taste like wild duck. It's almost akin to vandalism."

What do organizers plan to do with the crows?

"Right in the Dumpsters," said Lennox. ...

Attributes that so fascinate researchers are the very qualities that intrigue crow hunters.

"They're very intelligent and have very good eyesight," Van Nest said. "They can pick up where you're hiding, pick up movement very quickly. One of the tricks I like to use is to take a brown towel and sprinkle red food coloring around it. The brown towel represents a deer. Then you put some (crow) decoys on the ground and around the trees, you

Continued on next page

"Auburn is renowned for its crows. There's no reason we can't get some big names in there and turn this into a celebrity shoot. Put Auburn on the map."

ROOST NOTES *continued**Auburn, N.Y., & Ann Arbor winter roosts*

turn on your automated voice caller, and the next thing you know, you got crows all over you."

The tournament check-in point will be the parking lot of Spinouts, on Orchard Street. Judges will be checking for sunken eyes or frost-burned legs, signs that the crows have been dead longer than two days, said Van Nest.

"If a guy's going to cheat, if that's what it takes to be a man, then so be it," Van Nest said.

Crow season runs from Sept. 1 to March 31, but crows can only be hunted on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays, a legal quirk that goes back to the federal 1918 International Migratory Bird Act. Despite three days off per week, crow season runs longer than any other bird season, another appeal to crow hunters. ...

McGowan says the tournament might reduce the crow population slightly, but will have little effect on the phenomena of crows roosting in Auburn. ...

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Feb. 2, 2003

Like Capistrano, but With Crows and Shotguns

The Times reported that 36 teams of crow hunters had registered by Feb. 1 and that Auburn's crow shoot organizers

ate deep-fried crow sandwiches on Jan. 31 in the backroom of Spinouts Tavern.

"For the organizers, the tournament, like the lunch, is a matter of sport and spite," the Times observed.

THE ALPENA (MICH.) NEWS

Jan. 29, 2003

U-M campus houses 14,000 crows

An Associated Press story notes that University of Michigan officials at Ann Arbor are attempting to disperse the crows using "Bird Banger" fireworks to scare and scatter the birds. The crows often roosted in an area around the president's house, which was unoccupied while being renovated. The story estimates that 14,000 crows do not congregate simultaneously on the campus of 39,000 students, but without the fireworks scare tactics, the crows can number 6,000 or more in the evenings. The article notes that in 1996, the local Audubon Society estimated Ann Arbor's crow population to be 5,000. Last year, according to the story, the crow population numbered 18,000. Experts suggested the increase in numbers flocking to the campus was part of a 30-year trend toward wintering in urban areas.

WINTER ROOST OBSERVERS SEND REPORTS

In the previous Chronicle, ASCAR's Bureau of Roosting Affairs called for members and friends to send information about the location and nature of winter roosts in their area, for crow demographic study. Reports of any roosting sites or flocks that seem to contain more than 100 birds were requested.

The BRA noted: Crow roosts are thought provoking. Finding and watching them provides wholesome outdoor recreation and is intellectually stimulating. Reporting them is a good and useful deed performed to the benefit of ASCAR.

In February, the BRA received some fine roost reports. Two are included here.

HOUMA, LA. The roost is located in Houma, La., in a stand of pine and cypress covering several acres in the midst of partially developed suburbs. The area is a long, narrow piece of land at the intersection of Alma Street and Idlewild Drive, stretching almost all the way to Coteau Road. The ground is slightly swampy, covered with briars and other thick bushes. It is adjacent to the range

of a couple of Red Shouldered Hawks, often seen with a Corvid escort.

The roost appears to contain 200 birds on average. They can be seen flying to the roost between 4:30 and 5:30 in the afternoon, or about an hour before sunset. I'm never up early enough to see when they leave, but I often wake around 6 a.m. to hear loud cawing in the parking lot.

In past years, the roost contained much larger flocks, up to around 500 birds. Recently, the area where they roost has been subject to some development. For some reason, whenever someone wants to sell land around here the first thing they do is cut down all the trees and clear the brush. About three acres of this roosting site have been developed since I began observing it in 1999. Happily, no one seems very interested in most of this land, and it is still mostly wooded and winter home to many local crows.

In addition, I have noticed large flocks foraging in the barren cane fields along Bull Run Road (Parish Rd. 309). In the afternoon, huge flights can be seen

going from there to the roost. This is all in east and north Houma, in the area of Gray, Donner, and North Bayou Black.

I hope you find this both interesting and useful. I will, of course, continue to watch this roost. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. -- Corvi 630, the Swamp Raven.

LEAWOOD, KAN. The location is 8200 State Line, Leawood. It is in a stand of unknown trees next to a ditch that could be called a creek in wetter times. It's located behind the Leawood Baptist Church. I had thought there were more crows wintering here but when I got up there I could only count about 75 to 80. I had also witnessed a wintering in past years farther to the south at 8900 State Line that seemed to have more birds. But they have left that location.

I have fed the crows on my mail route for the past four years. And this last year, I have noticed a huge decline in the numbers. I will keep you informed of further developments.-- Corvi 500

UN-NEIGHBORLY THOUGHTS

Gentlecorvi:

While I am of the road kill and dumpster school myself, I think those philosophers among us deserve some space on the pages of the Chronicle too, "Questions a Crow Might Pose."

I was most interested in the reports cited by John McGuire, and Corvi 94's contribution to the debate as lately I seem to be seeing a decrease in the number of crows locally. Body counts are not high, but running three to four times, conservatively, above normal.

The crows here in Georgetown maintain a high profile year around, aggressive, noisy, and always entertaining. I occasionally fed them, if I came up with something I couldn't use but they might have liked. I am beginning to think that was a bad idea. If I talked to them in their language or English they would answer and come. Initially they coordinated the operation with loud vocal instructions and reconnoitering flights, making sure I was immobile or better yet out of sight. Only a few of the flock would actually come in close enough to take the food. The others would then try to take the food away, with a high degree of success.

In late fall, sightings declined. Crows no longer answered my calls, nor came for food. I don't at this time attribute this directly to West Nile, but with all the negative publicity it has generated, I imagine a neighbor may have concluded that crows are a dangerous vector, and poisoned them. -- Very truly yours, *Corvi 171, Georgetown, Conn.*

SIR EDMOND'S TERRITORY

Dear Fellow Corvids,

Please find enclosed intended to help



LETTERS

defray costs associated with publication of the Corvi Chronicle. It's been quite some time since my last contribution.

I have a most vexing trivia query, the answer to which might be of interest to other readers of the Chronicle besides myself. What, pray tell, is the scientific name of the ravens which are indigenous to the Himalayas? One of the common names for this raven appears to be *Gorak*. Here, too, name derivation is very difficult to discern from the available literature. Is the Himalayan raven perhaps a cut above other ravens? Do these birds perhaps practice or profess the teachings of Buddha? Thanks for any information you may be able to provide. -- *Corvi Crowmagnum, Bethesda, Md.*

20 YEARS OBSERVING NEST

Dear Sirs:

Just a note to say that I'm interested in your group.

I have had a 20-year ongoing relationship with a pair of ravens that have their nest near my property.

My house is isolated in the forest, near the town Cumberland that is situated on the east coast of Vancouver Island, near a larger town of Courtenay.

Like everyone who has had ravens to enjoy I have many stories of their antics.

-- *Corvi 883, Cumberland, B.C., Canada*

WRONY

Hello,

I was delighted to learn that there was an organization dedicated to the exchange of stories, studies and anecdotes regarding crows and ravens. My husband and I adore these birds.

Do you know that a Polish film director made a movie called "Wrony" (it means "crows" in Polish). Perhaps you can find it somewhere. I have not seen it myself.

Please add us to your membership list as two new Corvis. -- *Corvi 992 and 788 Berkeley, Calif.*

LONELY CORVI

ASCAR:

Is there a corvi dating service for lonely corvi?

Sincerely, *Corvi #422#!([2Z1#9] Dallas, Texas*

Editor's note: We referred this letter to ASCAR's Bureau of Affairs of the Roost. Most BAR officials are on vacation but the Chronicle hopes to have an answer for Corvi 422#!([2Z1#9] in good time.

WHITE CROW SIGHTING

We have a white crow in our section of Wartrace, Tenn.

S/he is all white, except the beak and a Jay Leno patch at the base of the tail.

S/he has been with us for a little less than a year now. S/he hangs out with a group that we assume is his/her family group, and it seems like they get a long pretty well.

Observing their actions and reactions, we're not sure if s/he is the leader

Continued on next page

The Corvi Chronicle is published irregularly by corvi who have an interest in or need for doing so for members of The American Society of Crows and Ravens and others. There is no subscription fee, but it is customary and seems to send contributions to pay for production and mailing. There is a direct connection between contributions, the size of the Chronicle and its frequency of distribution. Those who do not choose to contribute will continue to receive the Chronicle and enjoy all membership privileges. However, they will no doubt suffer a loss of self-esteem and may occasionally be mocked by other corvis.

Members are reminded to make new corvi by duplicating and passing along issues of the Chronicle.

ASCAR has a home page or chat room on the Internet:

<http://www.ascaronline.org/>

Editor..... Corvi #009

Art Directors Corvi #2, #005, #90, #76 and #989

The Board Known only to themselves

The Chronicle accepts articles and manuscripts of reasonable length on any topic acknowledged by The Board, news clippings and general correspondence. Unused material will be returned in good time to the authors. Commentary (insightful, indignant or otherwise) should be addressed to:

ASCAR / CORVI CHRONICLE
KAW RIVER VALLEY ROOST
BOX 1423
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Letters

continued

or the misfit or both.

Getting a clear photo of his/her without a telephoto lens is about impossible. My friend John took a photo or two, and s/he just looks like a white dot in a landscape. But s/he is as healthy as a horse (knock on wood) and very handsome, especially when backlit by the sun.

We're tickled to have him/her, and it seems like s/he's here to stay...for now. — *Corvi 197, Wartrace, Tenn.*

BREAKER BREAKER

I think that the crows and ravens are actively trying to communicate with the humans and have been for some time. I expect a breakthrough soon. -- *Corvi 666, Mountain View, Calif.*

BOILED FISH HEADS

ASCAR:

"My" ravens or crows enjoy my food every day. Fish heads from my fish store (free), boiled and served warm on top of the snow is a favorite, before bread and bird food. -- *Corvi 602, Danbury, Conn.*

Privacy act

ASCAR now numbers — so think some who enjoy counting things — about 900 members. Alphabetically and in terms of interests and attitudes members range — an expression — from academics to Zoroastrians. But only the Editor and an associate minion know who and where they all are. This is in keeping with the Corvi Privacy Act that forbids those who know from talking about or to other corvis or using their names and addresses in the Chronicle without permission. The CPA is occasionally tested by purveyors of crow curios wanting access to mailing lists.

However, because many members have similar interests and have indicated a desire to make the acquaintance of others who share them, some thought has been given to adjusting the CPA to accommodate these wishes. Therefore anyone who would like to hear from other corvi should send along their name and address to the editor. These will be published occasionally in the Chronicle. Names are not absolutely necessary — Corvi numbers will do — but addresses are. Obviously those who wish to remain known only to the editor and her associate minion should do nothing and will continue to enjoy the protection of CPA.

Crows

Haiku by Barton "Corvus" Cole

*Limp, rain-soaked feathers,
You seem somewhat subdued now.
Relax-the sun comes.*

*The crow views his realm
From the fir tree home of
The exiled Eagle.*

*Sunday morning sleep
Disturbed by noisy cawing.
Have a damned biscuit!*

*What a lovely scam —
Earning my salary, but
Writing about crows.*

*A treeful of crows
Vote on which is noisiest,
They all are winners.*

*Early morning sun
Warms the alert scavengers,
They set off to work.*

*I talk to the crow
Perched in the leafless maple,
He replies in kind.*

*Hey, you crows, up there!
Max and I saved crumbs for you —
Big ones, half a scone.*

*Would I trade my hands
To stretch out black wings with you,
And fly forever?*

*They say crows can't count,
But what do numbers matter,
If all crows are one?*

*Outside my window,
The skeleton of a crow
Diligently guards*

*These crows — bold, cocky,
Radiant and self-assured,
Whispering hoarsely*

*I almost touched you
When you came up the back steps
To eat a biscuit.*

*Looking like surfers,
Crows watch the wind from rooftops,
Waiting to jump up.*

*Wingtips extended,
I watch all the other crows
Fly toward the sun.*

*Over Arles wheatfields,
Crows pronounce their opinion
Of Vincent's canvas*

*As crows are my friends,
No matter where I travel,
I'll know the language.*

*Ordinary crow,
Scattering light from feathers,
You look black to me.*

*Spiraling feather,
A visit from up above,
Shadows flit away.*

*A feather from the sky,
Black, truncated, Functional,
Will liven my house.*

*All crows act like guys,
But you have to remember,
Some of them are girls.*

*A caucus of crows,
Silhouettes in sunset trees,
Thinking about night
when they plunge from low heights
like suddenly becalmed black kites*

*with a har-har-har toward their
pals on the ground then adjust
their wing flaps just in time*

*but when I see a lone raven pursued
by a squadron of stupid sparrows
with nests of offspring to protect*

I think of Socrates and Galileo



New Caledonia stamp celebrates tool maker

In 2001, New Caledonia issued a stamp celebrating the tool making of the New Caledonia crow, *Corvus moneduloides*. The stamp features a wild crow holding a pandanus tool it had made [to fish a grub from a Pandanus tree].

The Chronicle has published stories previously about the research on New Caledonian crows and tool-making by New Zealand researchers Gavin Hunt and Russell Gray at the University of Auckland.

Hunt's Web page includes a photo with different view (than the stamp) of a New Caledonia crow using a bent twig to hook a grub in a tree trunk.

<http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/psych/research/Evolution/Gavin.htm>

Hunt notes he has received funding for a three-year crow research project evolving from the work he and Gray have done.

"Our research programme is based around (i) describing the tool behaviour of crows, and (ii) determining the underlying neural and cognitive mechanisms

that have allowed these birds rather than our closest relatives to converge with humans in specialized and/or advanced aspects of tool behaviour.

"The funding for the next stage of our crow research from 2003-2005 is provided by the New Zealand government through the Marsden Fund. This three-year project titled "Tool manufacture, social transmission and cognition: New Caledonian crows as a model system" will focus on how New Caledonian crows obtain their tool skills."

Corvi Chronicle

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